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**Question of Palestine**

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**Fifty-fifth year**

## Letter dated 23 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention a statement on the Middle East peace process issued on 22 May 2000 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Monteiro**
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

00-45051 (E) 250500 250500

## Annex to the letter dated 23 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

## Statement on the Middle East peace process issued on 22 May 2000 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union

The European Union considers that a real opportunity exists to attain a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, based on the basic principles established within the framework of Madrid. The European Union remains ready to work with the parties to this end.

The European Union deplores the recent escalation of tension and violence that has taken place in the Occupied Territories. The European Union urges all parties concerned to exercise restraint and appeals to Israel and the Palestinian Authority to intensify their efforts with a view to urgently concluding the Framework Agreement foreseen in the Sharm-el-Sheikh Memorandum of September 1999 and the Permanent Status negotiations within the agreed time-frame and with the courage and spirit of compromise that they demand. The European Union welcomes the Israeli decision to transfer Abu Dis, Ayzariyah and Suwahirah to full Palestinian control.

The European Union appeals to the parties to refrain from unilateral acts that may prejudge the final negotiated agreements. In this context the European Union expresses particular concern about renewed Israeli settlement activity and road building, which is contrary to international law and which further complicates the search for solutions. A solution in full conformity with agreement signed regarding Palestinian prisoners detained by Israel should be found.

Reiterating the importance of the Syrian and Lebanese Tracks for a comprehensive solution in the region, the European Union urges the parties to stay engaged with a view to early resumption of negotiations.

Pending a comprehensive solution, the European Union welcomes Israel's decision to withdraw from southern Lebanon in full accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) and expresses the hope that this move will facilitate reconciliation and rehabilitation in the region. The European Union expresses full support for the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to ensure implementation of the above-mentioned resolutions. The European Union urges all sides to fully cooperate with the United Nations to this end. In this context, the European Union emphasizes that the safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and other international personnel on the ground must be respected by all sides at all times.